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## CONCERNING THE WORD *GRAAL*, *GREAL*

The last scholar to treat the origin of O.F. *graal* was Foerster, *Kristian von Troyes: Wörterbuch*, p. 174. He says: "Etymologisch kann es nur auf \**gradalis* zurückgehen. Ueber seine Herkunft sind wir ganz im Dunkeln. In Helinand's Zitat kommt dies Wort vor, also erst im XIII. Jahrhundert. Seine Herleitung von *gradus* "Stufe," ist wenig anziehend. Von *cratalis* (von *crat-er*) Diez, IIc, was Meyer-Lübke aufstellt, kann keine Rede sein—das provençalische *grazal* lehnt es sofort ab." Nevertheless, when we turn to the glossary proper we read: "graal (cratale?) N. graaus m. *Art Gefäss, Schüssel*." What is the reader to believe?

The oft-cited passage from Helinand (Tissier, *Bibl. Cisterc.*, VII, 73) is as follows:

Hoc tempore in Britannia cuidam heremitae demonstrata fuit [monstrata est<sup>1</sup>] mirabilis quaedam visio per angelum de Joseph decurione nobili [sancto Joseph decurione], qui corpus Domini deposuit de cruce et de catino illo vel [sive] paropside in quo Dominus caenavit cum discipulis suis, de quo ab eodem heremita descripta est historia quae dicitur *gradale* [de *gradali*]. *Gradalis* autem vel [sive] *gradale* gallice dicitur scutella lata et aliquantulum profunda, in qua preciosae dapes [add: cum suo jure] divitibus solent apponi *gradatim*, unus morsellus post alium in diversis ordinibus. Dicitur et vulgari nomine *greal* [graalz], quia *grata et acceptabilis* est in ea comedenti, tum continens, quia forte argentea est vel de alia pretiosa materia, tum propter contentum. i. [id est] ordinem multiplicem dapium preciosarum. Hanc historiam latine scriptam invenire non potui, sed tantum gallice scripta habetur a quibusdam proceribus, nec facile, ut aiunt, tota inveniri potest. Hanc autem nondum potui ad legendum sedulo ab aliquo impetrare. Quod mox ut potero [potuero], verisimiliora et utiliora succinete transferam in latinum.

Cf. especially Heinzel, *Französische Gralromane*, p. 86.

The *terminus ad quem* for Helinandus is 1216; see J. D. Bruce, *Romanic Review*, III (1912), 188. The beginning of the passage indicates that Helinand is referring to the *Grand St. Graal*, since this is the only Grail-romance in which the vision in question is recorded. Besides, the romance states (Hucher, III, 102): "Robiers de Borron qui ceste estoire translata de *latin* en franchois, apres celui saint hermite a qui nostres sires le livra premierement."<sup>2</sup> At the same

<sup>1</sup> I give the variants from Migne, *Patr. Lat.* 212, col. 814.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Hucher, III, 330: "Ce dist li contes del saint Graal, qui est istoire estraite de totes les istores, si com messires Robers de Boron lou tesmoignet, par les escriptures qu'il fist translater de latin en roman." Also 351.



so much at least is certain, that at the time Helinand wrote, the tradition of a Latin Grail-book was well established.

It is natural then that Helinand should first give the word *graal* in its Latin form: *gradalis vel gradale*, and later add *vulgari nomine greal*. The relationship of *greal* to *graal* would be that of *greanter* to *graanter* [from *credentare*\*]. According to Baist, *Prorektoratsrede*, p. 13, note, the French word signifies "[eine] zum Anrichten dienende Schüssel . . . auf den Haushalt der Vornehmen beschränkt." The *Alexandre* (MS of Venice 618) says, vs. 611: "Ersoir mangai o toi a ton graal," which agrees with Crestiens' use of the word as a common noun, vs. 3182 [Baist]:

Un graal antre ses deus mains  
Une dameisele tenoit.

Cf. the *Assises de Jérusalem* (cited by Roquefort, *Glossaire*, p. 703, and Godefroy): "et toutes les escueles et les greaus en que il aura servi le cors dou Roy du premier mes." It is doubted, however, whether the word is indigenous in the north. "Seine eigentliche Heimat," says Baist, "ist Südfrankreich wo *grazal* seit 1010 belegt ist." Baist gives no reference. But Gröber, *Grundriss*, II, 1, 502, says: "*grad(u)-alis* . . . das schon einmal 1010 in *Spanien* im Sinne eines Behältnisses für Speise und Trank vielleicht gebraucht worden ist." The reference is found in Du Cange, s.v. *gradalis* [and Du Cange suggests *gradualis* only as an "interpretation"], as follows: "Testamentum ann. 1010 in Append. Marcae Hisp.<sup>1</sup> col. 973. Ad sancta Fide coenobio gradales duas de argento, ad sancto Vincentio de Castres anapos duos de argento." Obviously, the citation from the year 1010 is Latin and not Provençal. See, also, Raynouard, III, 501, and Levy, *Suppl.* Moreover, if the word were Provençal in origin we should expect *grasal* in Old French, and, as Foerster observes (p. 176), the Grail-matter has no connection with the south; certainly not at the beginning. In short, we are thus forced to conclude that although the word is today lacking in the west, north, and northeast (cf. *Atlas linguistique* and Foerster, p. 176), it was once more widely distributed and that O.F. *graal* and Prov. *grazal* are independent derivatives.

But derived from what? Of Helinand's two explanations, the first *in qua preciosae dapes solent apponi gradatim* is, as Foerster

<sup>1</sup> See Petrus de Marca, *Marca Hispanica*, ed. by Étienne Baluze, Paris, 1688, col. 973, Testamentum Ermengaudi Comitis Vrgellensis.

states, *wenig anziehend*. Cf. Diez, p. 602, and Baist, *loc. cit.*, "dass die Speisen *gradatim* angeordnet seien, scheint lediglich der Worterklärung zuliebe gemacht." This is certainly true of Helinand's second explanation, *quia grata et acceptabilis est*, etc., since this type of etymologizing is found as early as Robert, vs. 2659:

Par droit Graal l'apelera;  
Car nus le Graal ne verra,  
Ce croi-je, qu'il ne li agrée:  
A touz ceus pleist de la contrée,  
A touz agrée et abelist.

In vs. 852 Robert had already spoken of the *veissel precieus et grant*. M.Lat. *garalis*, cited by Hertz, *Parzival*<sup>2</sup>, p. 420, as occurring in a testament of 873 ["garales argenteos cum binis cochleariis duos"] is connected with *garum* "dish for garum" (cf. Baist, *loc. cit.*) and would not satisfy the demands of the case. As for *gradualis* "service-book," O.F. *grael* and *greal*, this may or may not have been in Robert's mind when he wrote, vs. 2680:

A l'eure de tierce assena  
Car quant a ce Graal iroient  
Sen service l'apeleroient;

cf. Paulin Paris, *Romans de la table ronde*, I, 379; certainly our word was not derived from it. Thus we are thrown back on Diez's *crater*, *cratalis*\*—which in one passage of the same book Foerster categorically rejects, in another tentatively accepts [*cratale* ?]. *Cratalis*\* could easily have given *gradalis* since the changes from *cr* to *gr* and from intervocalic *t* to *d* are attested by other examples; cf. Schuchardt, *Vokalismus*, I, 124 ff., and C. H. Grandgent, *Vulgar Latin*, § 256. As for Provençal *grazal*,<sup>1</sup> intervocalic *d* does not seem to have become *z* until the first part of the twelfth century; cf. Grandgent, *Old Provençal*, p. 49, and Suchier, Gröber's *Grundriss*, I, 581. Guilhem de Peitieu, Appel, 11, 17, has *lauzar* from *laudare*. Until, therefore, other evidence than what Foerster gives is at hand, Diez's etymology—with the added M.Lat. stage of *gradalis* "dish"—is the most acceptable. In any case, *cratalis*\* > *gradalis* > *graal* has many points in its favor. Finally, compare "The Fisher King in the Grail Romances," *PMLA*, XXIV (1909), 412.

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<sup>1</sup> Grandgent, *Old Provençal*, p. 54, thinks that *grazal* may be a "cross between *cratella*\* < *crater* and *gradale* 'service-book'; so *grazelet*."